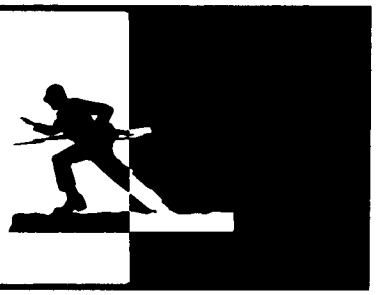
PROFESSIONAL FORUM



Counterinsurgency
In An Urban Environment

CAPTAIN O. KENT STRADER

Infantrymen like fighting clearly defined conflicts–a uniformed enemy with certain equipment who fights in a generally predictable manner. As the Cold War ended, few realized the role that the United States would play in peace enforcement operations. But the current trend in conflicts–from Algeria, Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and a longer list of small brushfire conflicts with geopolitical ramifications–requires that infantrymen train for the diverse contingencies of the 21st century. All of these regions have, however, a common factor–an insurgent threat in or near an urban center.

U.S. military doctrine calls for avoiding committing troops to combat in urban areas and populations whenever possible. High-intensity conflict calls for all civilians to be relocated when feasible, making the fight a clearly defined battle. Low-intensity conflict (LIC) places civilians, regulars, and guerrillas on the same battlefield. With the worldwide trend toward urbanization, the United States will increasingly find itself in conflicts that require extensive LIC training using advanced military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) to combat insurgents.

The form, scope, and development of the military commitment to counterinsurgency operations will depend upon the circumstances and seriousness of the situation. The way these types of operations are to be conducted cannot be neatly arranged into established scenarios. A counterinsurgency mission can manifest itself as a reaction to civil disobedience requiring crowd and riot control measures, as in the food riots in Somalia. This type of operation may require security forces to deal with the safe passage and distribution of food–stuffs and provisions, to conduct cordon and search operations in urban terrain, and to serve as quick-reaction force for military police.

Counterinsurgency can come in the form of civil disobedience requiring riot control, as in the food riots in Somalia.

On a more advanced scale, U.S. forces may find themselves enforcing a peace agreement while attempting to identify and deal with disaffected groups that conduct acts of terrorism to destabilize the peace process. There is a potential for crossover in these types of operation, when a simple operation that requires providing medical care and food is sabotaged by insurgents. In most of these situations–and there are many other potential scenarios–the ability to differentiate between friend and foe will not be easy. Soldiers will have to be more aware of their surroundings; for example, patrolling with the intent of gathering intelligence and establishing good will with the local populace. Snipers may be incorporated to conduct surveillance and effect surgical kills on threats as they emerge. Rules of engagement will become more complex in impoverished nations where the principal building materials are tin, plywood, and other scavenged materials, and insurgents will be indistinguishable from the populace. In these and other marginal environments, units will deploy more frequently with psychological operations and civil affairs teams.

Training for urban counterinsurgency operations requires centralized planning and decentralized execution. Peace enforcement and peacekeeping operations require the individual soldier to know more and be responsible for more than the average soldier of ten years ago. Training on intelligence gathering is one of the categories soldiers must develop. During Operation *Just Cause,* after the initial hostilities had died down and the methodical search for weapon caches

and Panamanian Defense Forces began, soldiers on patrol in Panama City were expected to gather and report intelligence information.

Soldiers and units gather intelligence by observing the area of operations and gaining the trust of local noncombatants. At battalion level, the use of the remotely monitored battlefield sensor system, low-level voice intercept, and ground surveillance radar can augment intelligence gathered from patrols. Still, the subtleties of operating in urban terrain will make using these assets more of a challenge to operators and commanders. Aerial photographs with the grid system overlaid can augment maps to assist commanders in various operations. Intelligence gathering is the heart of counterinsurgency operations; it should be the first task trained by any unit preparing to undertake such a mission.

The mission essential task list (METL) for urban counterinsurgency is long, and it requires intensive training, especially at the individual, team, and squad levels. Many of the METL tasks associated with these operations are carried out independently by squad and team leaders. While there are opportunities to train for some of these tasks at the combat training centers, training at home station can be difficult due to the nature of training support requirements. In order to incorporate the large numbers of civilians needed to support training in riot control operations, other battalions may be required to provide role players for greater realism. One unit used family members from their company—placing them in MILES harnesses during training on clearing rooms—to train with noncombatants in an urban environment. Training for these operations also requires creativity and originality in designing training schedules.

The skills required include cooperation between the combat arms, combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) branches. For example, the threat of riots would make it advantageous for a military police advisor to be attached to every infantry battalion staff in a peacekeeping, peace enforcement, or humanitarian relief mission. Collating a list of linguists, by language, ahead of time can provide assistance to overtaxed interpreters attached to the battalion. The lack of a front line, which is intrinsic in a LIC environment, will place CSS units forward with infantry forces. This means they will have to train extensively in marksmanship, reacting to vehicular ambushes, dealing with riot conditions, and reacting to mine warfare. Consequently, infantry units will find it necessary to conduct parallel planning and assist their supporting forward support battalion in training for their missions in an urban environment.

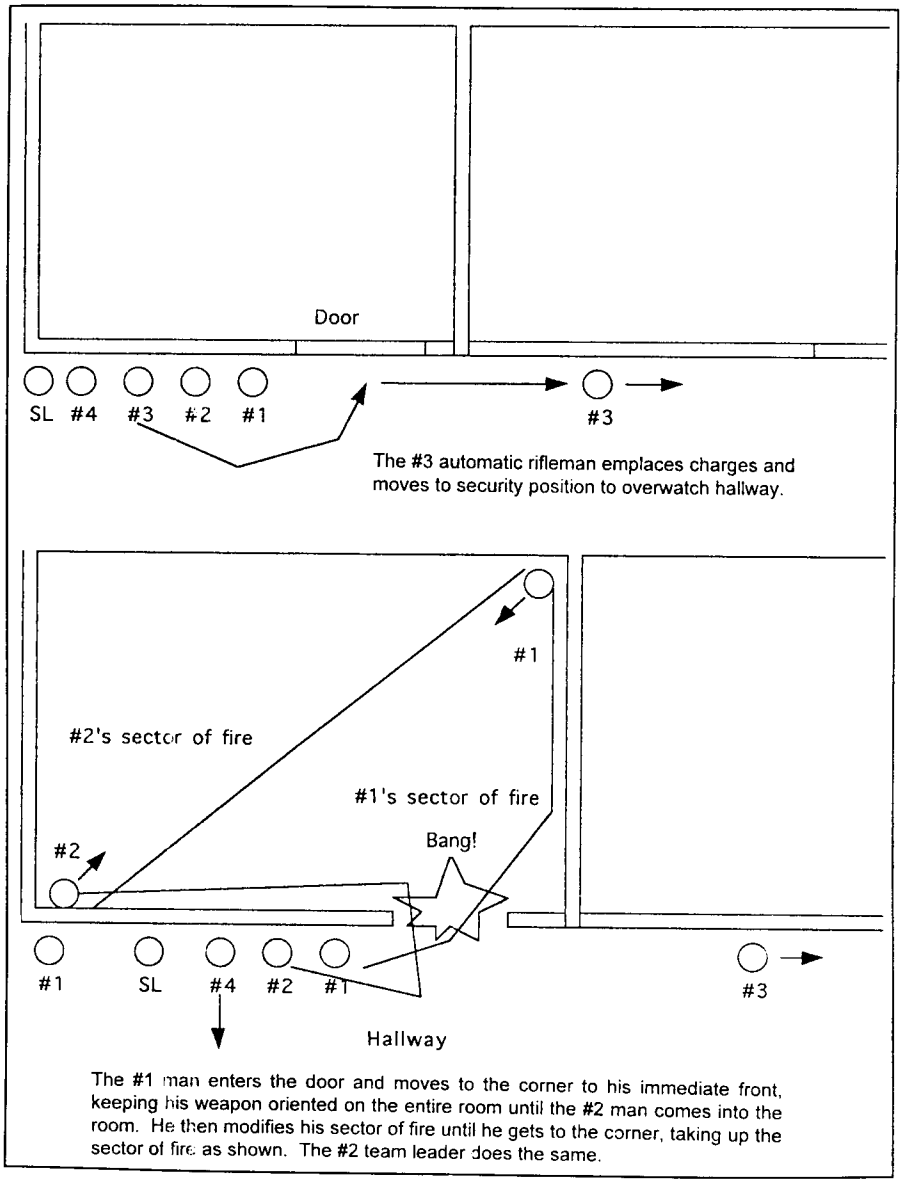


Figure 1. Four-man enter-and-clear technique.

Training for counterinsurgency in an urban environment requires an unprecedented emphasis on the marksmanship skills of the individual soldiers under varying conditions. These conditions include limited visibility operations with night vision devices, quick-kill close engagements, and long-range sharpshooting. These types of engagements do not have score sheets—manual or computerized—which demonstrates a need for them to be developed in combination with standardized ranges Army-wide.

During the preparations for the planned invasion of Haiti, my unit trained to clear a prominent U.S. offi-

cial's quarters of Haitian forces in a limited visibility environment with night vision devices. The rules of engagement called for no noncombatant casualties and minimal collateral damage. Similar situations will present themselves in the years to come. In the past, these types of operations have been the specialty of Ranger and Special Forces units, but future operations will be conducted by line units. Units of the 10th Mountain Division regularly had to engage in urban conflict with insurgents in Somalia, requiring precision engagements to avoid noncombatant casualties.

Neither the manuals for training line units for this type of marksmanship nor the ammunition needed to train to standard are available. The John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center's Special Text 21-6-1, *Close Quarter Battle,* provides train-the-trainer information on shooting techniques, advanced weapons handling in a MOUT environment, and corrective technique training for specific shooting errors. The infantry needs a manual like this for training soldiers to become better marksmen under urban conditions.

Advanced or precise MOUT training uses a two-man or four-man team entering and clearing a room, using controlled fires, and in some situations advanced breaching techniques as well. These are not skills that are taught in any infantry manual, but units have incorporated them from time to time for certain situations. In our company one of our platoons used a four-man enter-and-clear technique (Figure 1) while another used a two-man technique (Figure 2). In a MOUT environment, troops from one platoon may work with those of another and will need to know a common procedure to work effectively together.

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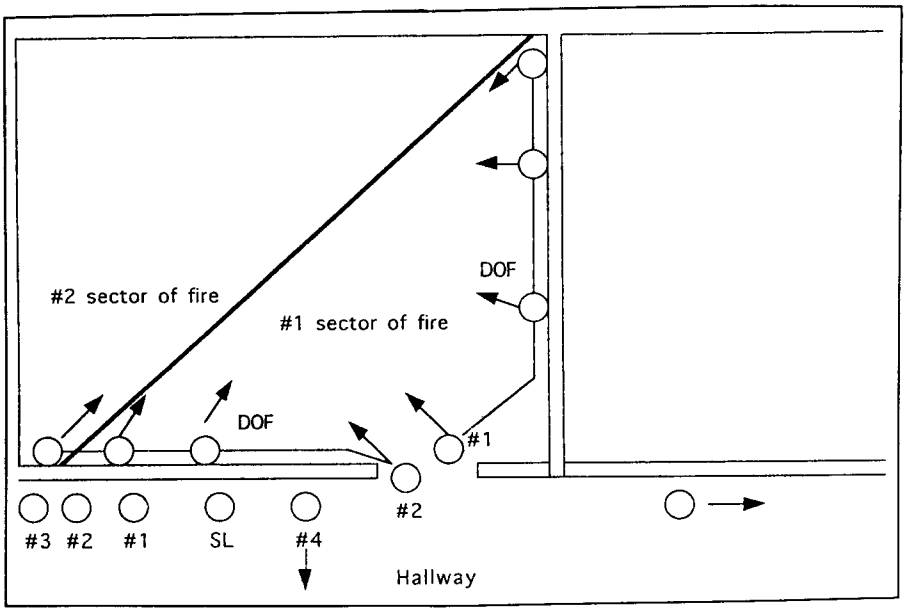

Figure 2. Two-man technique.

The use of grenades in this environment is not like that in a high-intensity conflict environment where a soldier throws a grenade into a room to clear it. The flash/bang grenade is the instrument of choice in a city environment, giving the attacker a high probability of surviving without killing any noncombatants in the process. The use of these grenades is not common among infantrymen, and soldiers should have an opportunity to train with them during MOUT live-fire exercises. A side note to weapons and ammunition in an urban counterinsurgency environment is the need for a shotgun in the U.S. Army inventory that is capable of breaching doors and engaging and killing an enemy at a maximum range of 100 meters. This weapon should be capable of firing slugs, all calibers of buckshot, and tear gas. Its purpose is to breach doors, employ riot control agents in advance of room clearing, and reduce projectile travel, lessening the incidence of fratricide or noncombatant casualties. *(See also "The 100-meter Combat Shotgun," by Stanley C. Crist, INFANTRY, September-October 1995, pages 5-7.)*

The proposed collective task list is a compilation of tasks that includes *cordon and search, construct and man a checkpoint, conduct vehicular and personnel searches, clear a building, conduct convoy escort, conduct noncombatant evacuation operations, conduct civil affairs and psychological operations, conduct civil disturbance operations, identify and clear a minefield, gather intelligence, and conduct humanitarian relief operations.* Conducting cordon and search operations in an urban environment, with its three-dimensional aspect, is particularly difficult. The 2d Battalion, 87th Engineers, used a technique known as "speed wiring" to cordon off portions of Kismayu in Somalia. The engineers drove a truck around the block targeted for search, dropping rolls of double concertina fence around the area in less than 15 minutes. The fence allowed maximum effort to be focused on the search while using minimum assets in the cordon. Openings in the wire were strategically placed to enable individuals to exit the cordon once they had been searched in a controlled manner and cleared.

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Conducting vehicular and personnel searches incorporates skills used by military police and those taught in antiterrorism courses. Units may be required to teach antiterrorism techniques to their soldiers twice a year, but the need to teach them techniques for checking cars for bombs, caches, and contraband is more specialized. The military police are the best source of information on this type of training. The car bomb that destroyed the Marine Barracks in Lebanon was an example of the ability of a radical insurgent to inflict staggering casualties on a less-than-vigilant peacekeeper. The first intent of a checkpoint should be the survivability of those manning it--to keep any vehicle from running the checkpoint or delivering a bomb that could kill U.S. soldiers manning it-and the second purpose should be to man it with qualified personnel and equipment to locate and neutralize insurgents. The site selected should be under the control of the friendly force three dimensionally.

Training for urban counter-insurgency operations requires centralized planning and decentralized execution.

Snipers should be employed in support of the operation. Military police bomb detection dogs may be used during checkpoint operations. The checkpoint should be moved, avoiding set patterns. The assistance of engineers will be necessary when constructing obstacles to be negotiated by vehicles approaching the checkpoint. The collective and individual skills necessary to conduct urban counterterrorism training are diverse and require new and innovative techniques, but knowing your enemy is probably the most difficult.

The incorporation of armored vehicles and Army helicopters is an essential psychological tool in defeating an enemy in an urban environment. During Operation *Just Cause*, the M551 Sheridan saw extensive use, including simply showing its presence during cordon and search operations. While the M1A1 tank cannot always fire its main gun due to the rules of engagement, it can provide cover for infantry forces attempting to establish a foothold. The M1A1's .50-caliber heavy-barrel machinegun and 7.62mm coaxial machinegun, when properly zeroed, can provide extremely accurate fire against snipers. In riot control operations, a crowd can be dispersed by the exhaust heat from an M1A1, backing up along the street and revving its engine.

Army reconnaissance aircraft can assist cordon forces in the vertical dimension of the urban battlefield. The battalion S-3 Air can be aloft during cordon operations to relay information directly over the command net, thereby helping coordinate command and control. This gives the commander a full view of his battle space. All infantrymen realize that the best method of clearing a building is from the top down. With the precision nature of urban counterinsurgency operations, the need to conduct aerial insertions by helicopter may become necessary for inserting clearing teams, snipers, and overwatch elements.

The insurgent is the wiliest of enemies. His knowledge of the local terrain and population is his greatest asset. He gains the support of the local population either by force (as in Vietnam), by popularity, or, for example, when the peacekeepers lose the support of the local population by choosing sides in a civil war. By day he may be a worker or student, but by night he may participate in ambushes on convoys, sniper attacks on checkpoints or patrols, or surveillance activities. Since his uniform is the local attire, with a weapon and possibly a bandolier, he can easily blend into the local population. His safe houses and routes of escape are numerous and his hiding places unseen by our technological advantage in air assets or thermal imagery. He will cover his escape with cleverly hidden booby traps. He will hide his weapon in the most ingenious places--such as elevator shafts, inside a mattress, under garbage, or in a false wall. To defeat such an adversary, we must break his will by tenacious and innovative forces and tactics. We must conduct frequent and random cordon and search operations; checkpoints that were at one location one day must suddenly appear without warning in a suspected area of insurgent activity on another day; patrols must be coordinated, must be supported by a quick reaction force, and must gather and report accurate intelligence.

U.S. forces conducting counter-insurgency operations must frequently vary the pattern and method of attack to keep the insurgent off balance and reduce his ability to anticipate our next move, instead of allowing him to dictate the terms of combat himself. The average soldier is the key to success in the urban environment.

The form, scope, and development of the military commitment to counterinsurgency operations will depend upon the circumstances and seriousness of the situation.

If U.S. peacekeepers in Sarajevo or Tuzla were to come under fire from a sniper, or if a convoy were suddenly ambushed and vehicles destroyed by a command-detonated mine, we must ensure that our soldiers would be prepared to deal with the insurgent force, aided by noncombatants from three separate ethnic groups, on urban terrain. With the proper training for their mission, and the right equipment to do the job, a U.S. force under such circumstances will be able to respond quickly and decisively, neutralize the threat, and continue to execute its mission.

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